

That is why I am so pleased that the Appropriations Committee has used this legislation to renew our commitment to clean water infrastructure. H.R. 2643 increases water-related research, restores funding for clean water grants to States, and directs greater resources to cleaning up contaminated groundwater sites. In doing so, this bill recognizes that investing in clean water protects our drinking supply, restores our rivers and lakes, and strengthens public health.

Mr. Chairman, Americans across the country—and in particular the people I represent from Sacramento—will benefit from this legislation's clean water provisions. No longer will we have to worry about untreated wastewater stagnating in our streets and polluting our rivers. No more will raw sewage seep into basements, public parks, and other areas where young children play.

When we pass this bill, the water our constituents drink will be cleaner. The rivers they swim in will house fewer bacteria. The sewers they rely on to transport wastewater will stop overflowing. Every Member of Congress has an interest in solving the problems of overwhelmed wastewater infrastructure, and H.R. 2643 begins to do so.

While this bill is but a beginning, Mr. Chairman, I am confident that the Democratic Congress will use it as a building block to continue restoring past cuts to clean water programs. The tangible benefits of this bill's clean water funding levels are considerable, but they are still just the first step in renewing our country's commitment to that basic building block of life that sustains us all.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2643. Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise to express my concerns about legislative amendments related to permitting drilling for oil or natural gas off of our Nation's Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

I want it to be very clear what I support with regard to offshore drilling. I believe it is important to ensure that we can adequately protect Florida's shoreline and I believe that the legislation approved last year by the Congress more than protects Florida's shoreline. I support a 100-mile buffer of protection for our beaches when it comes to drilling oil wells. Additionally, I am not opposed to allowing natural gas only wells at a distance closer than 100 miles, particularly in those States that want to permit natural gas wells closer to their coasts.

The current Federal moratorium on offshore drilling bans natural gas wells not only along the Florida coast, but also along southern, central and northern California; Washington; Oregon; and the North Atlantic, including Virginia. The State of Virginia has indicated that it would like to permit drilling off of its shore. The Democrat Governor of the State has asked for the ability to allow drilling off of Virginia's shore. The Republican legislature of Virginia has asked the Federal Government to remove the barrier to drilling off the coast. The Federal moratorium in the Interior and Environment Appropriations bills stops this policy asked for by the State of Virginia.

Additionally, with regard to Florida, I would like to clarify some confusion on this issue. Some have suggested that without the Federal moratorium rider on the Interior bill drilling would be allowed within 3 miles of the Florida coast. That is just simply not the case. The Presidential moratorium would remain in place

protecting Florida. Additionally, President Bush has pledged to ensure that Florida is permitted to maintain at least a 100-mile protective buffer. Moreover should the Presidential moratorium be removed, the Congress must enact legislation directing the Department of the Interior on where to permit Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) leases. This is not a one step process.

Some have suggested that allowing natural gas wells will do little to address the energy costs in the United States. This claim simply is not based on sound economics. As many of my colleagues know, over the past decade there has been a dramatic increase in the use of natural gas to produce electricity. Switching to natural gas for electric power generation has been a very quick and cost effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. According to a 2005 report from the Florida Public Service Commission, in 2003, 26 percent of Florida's electric power was generated using natural gas. By 2013, just 6 years from now, the FPSC projects that over 50 percent of Florida's electric power will be generated using natural gas. The cost of natural gas for electric power generation has more than doubled since 2002 from about \$3.00 per thousand cubic feet to more than \$7.00 in 2007. Clearly, Florida is increasingly relying on natural gas to meet our everyday energy needs and ensuring a longer term affordable supply of natural gas will make Florida consumers' power bills more affordable.

When you consider this growing reliance on clean burning natural gas along with price increases we have seen, it is clear that Florida consumers will continue to pay higher costs for electricity if we don't expand our natural gas supply.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure that Florida has an adequate protective buffer while looking to meet our constituents' long-term clean energy needs.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of strengthening environmental protections, preserving public lands, and confronting global warming.

In the past 6 years of Republican budgets, our National Parks, forests, and wildlife refuges were recklessly neglected. The Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, the main entity responsible for enforcing environmental laws, was left scrambling for funding. Nonetheless, President Bush suggested another big cut in his budget request. Fortunately for the millions of people who enjoy our public lands and who rely on the EPA to protect our air and water, the new Democratic Congress is committed to reversing years of dereliction. Instead, we are making overdue investments in environmental protections.

The Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (H.R. 2643) provides for modest, but crucial, funding increases in a number of areas including: \$437 million above the President's request for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund that will allow approximately 150 communities to modernize their drinking water and wastewater infrastructure; \$200 million increase over 2007 levels for the National Park Service to end a decade of declines in staffing, visitor services, and maintenance; \$900 million more than the President proposed for EPA enforcement and scientific research.

This bill protects coastal ecosystems and communities by maintaining the longstanding

moratoria on oil and gas drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf. This restriction protects the California coastlines that my constituents and I hold dear.

Finally, after years of denials and stonewalling by Republicans, this bill recognizes that climate change is a reality and requires us to act.

It would create a Commission on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation to make recommendations on how to best respond to climate change. This long overdue step will allow us to begin to address the many challenges that global warming presents.

President Bush has issued a veto threat and called this bill "irresponsible and excessive." What is truly "irresponsible" is wasting billions of dollars on a fraudulent war while ignoring the threat of global warming and failing to protect the environment and the public health. This bill begins to alter the dangerous environmental course that the President and the Republicans have led us down the last 6 years. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting yes.

Mrs. CUBIN. Mr. Chairman, the Report accompanying H.R. 2643, the fiscal year 2008 Interior and the Environment Appropriations Act, urges the Environmental Protection Agency to study the health and environmental effects of using trona in air pollution control systems. Trona is a naturally occurring, non-toxic mineral widely used in food additives, in glass manufacturing, paper, laundry products and medicine. It is odorless, non-combustible and stable in the air. Trona is a key ingredient of baking soda. Here in the United States, we are fortunate to have an abundance of this incredibly useful mineral. The Green River Basin of Wyoming is home to the world's largest trona deposit, and the Wyoming trona industry alone produces close to 20 million tons of trona every year and employs more than 2,000 people.

For almost 20 years, trona has also played a critical and growing role in air pollution control at coal-fired power plants, cement plants, municipal incinerators and similar facilities around the country, including Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Virginia and Washington. Texas-based Solvay Chemicals, Inc. pioneered the use of trona in air pollution control systems, and it is the only company in the United States that produces trona products for that purpose.

Trona simply works in air pollution control systems, and it works incredibly well. The EPA, which has repeatedly approved the use of trona in air pollution control systems, reports that those systems have actually reduced sulfur dioxide emissions by more than 85 percent and hydrochloric acid emissions by 95 percent at several power plants around the country, without increasing particulate matter emissions.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 2643. I want to thank my colleague and friend, Chairman NORM DICKS, for his tireless work in bringing to the floor a bill that we should all be proud of because of its commitment to protecting and conserving our environment and natural resources for future generations to enjoy.

John F. Kennedy said in March 1961, "It is our task in our time and in our generation to hand down undiminished to those who come after us, as was handed down to us by those who went before, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours." In previous years we have